H
4

Ju45H S534

No. 55298

LIBRARY OF

McGILL UNIVERSITY

MONTREAL

Received 1921

B.V.
Ju45h
5554

How to Settle the Irish Question

BY

BERNARD SHAW

DUBLIN
The Talbot Press Limited

LONDON
Constable & Company Limited

PRICE SIXPENCE NET

HOW TO SETTLE THE IRISH QUESTION

How to Settle the Irish Question

BY

BERNARD SHAW

DUBLIN
The Talbot Press Limited

LONDON
Constable & Company Limited

COPYRIGHT, 1917. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
FIRST PUBLISHED DECEMBER, 1917.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS book is a reprint of a series of articles written by me at the suggestion of the London Daily Express. They were published simultaneously in London and Dublin, Cork and Belfast, on the 27th, 28th, and 29th November last: a moment chosen in view of the critical stage the deliberations of the Irish Convention were then believed to have reached.

My qualification for dealing with the subject is that though I am an Irishman, of the Protestant landlord variety, I have not lived in Ireland since I left it in 1876, and that though I have since then been occupied almost continually with the problems of modern political science, I have studied them from the point of view of white civilization as a whole, having no constituency to conciliate and no social ambition to further; for it has been my fortune to secure by my artistic activities a public position infinitely preferable to any that political life or office has to offer. I can, without compromising that position, say things that no party politician dares say, and that even those politicians whose public spirit is above party can hardly say without too much offence to the factions they are striving to reconcile.

Thus I am not only disinterested, but disengaged. This is not altogether my own fault. Believing that I might be of some service on the Convention, I conceived it to be my public duty to take steps to have it suggested to the Government and to the Convention itself that I should be nominated or co-opted as a member. By doing so I brought the British Government and the Irish Convention nearer to unanimity than was supposed possible at the time. Fortunately for me, as it turned out when secrecy was imposed on the Convention, I was left free when the officially accredited representatives of Irish opinion were

55298

muzzled. That was not the intention; but it has been the effect. I mention this circumstance because I want to make it clear that I do not enjoy the confidence of the Government or of any party in the Convention. My articles were not concerted with any individual or group, nor read before they were in print by anyone except in the course of newspaper business. I had discussed the question carefully, in my capacity as chairman of a committee of the Fabian Society called The Empire Reconstruction Committee, with English and Australian students of the Empire problem. Without such critical discussion I should have nothing but my personal notions to put forward; and this book would be an impertinence. But my Fabian colleagues are as completely out of Irish party politics as I am myself. I represent nobody on the Convention, though I have valued friends on it. I represent nobody in Parliament or in the Government (this is nowadays not always the same thing). I am only the spokesman of Common Sense, and of the experience already gained in the integration of distinct nations with distinct creeds into a single Power.

In the course of my occasional visits to Ireland and conversations with Irishmen interested in the national question, I had noticed that two considerations which were quite familiar to me were new to them. The first, bearing on the fiscal problem, was the enormous part which socialization of the rents of land, capital, and personal ability, as part of the now irresistible European movement for Redistribution of Income, must play in all but the most provisional and perfunctory schemes of public finance. The other was the final demonstration by the present war of the hollowness of the national independences and neutralities which are set up, not by the internal strength of a nation's position, but by the interested guarantees of foreign Powers. For obvious reasons, it is almost impossible for popular statesmen to be frank on this

subject; but diplomatists know perfectly well that a great Power guarantees the independence of a small nation only to acquire control of its foreign policy without responsibility. Many English people are furiously angry with me for giving away this open secret because of its bearing on the case of Belgium. But as it is the sole really convincing reply to Casement's plan of a German-Irish alliance, I am not prepared to allow numbers of patriotic young Irishmen to involve themselves in treasonable intrigues merely to gratify the taste of patriotic old Englishmen for virtuous indignation.

For the rest I have no novelty to offer except the presentation of the Irish problem in something like reasonable proportion to the rest of the world's business.

G. B. S.

Ayot, St. Lawrence,
1st December, 1917.

HOW TO SETTLE THE IRISH QUESTION

CHAPTER I

THE FOLLY OF SINN FEIN

THE task of the Irish Convention is to reconcile three parties, all of whom have impressed their views on the Irish people by a long and sensational propaganda. The three are the Home Rule or Parnellite party in the House of Commons, the Ulster or Carsonite party, and Sinn Fein. The first, having been hammered and worn down into opportunism by long parliamentary experience, will accept any settlement that may enable them to come to their constituents as the saviors of their country and the restorers of the Irish National Parliament in College Green. Old parliamentary hands care little for the quality of a settlement provided it will pass on the platform and at the polling-booth.

The other two, Ulster and Sinn Fein, are the hard nuts to crack. It is quite hopeless to expect that Sir Horace Plunkett can reconcile them by inducing either to accept the views of the other. But if a solution can be found which reduces them both to absurdity, then Sinn Fein may embrace it because it shews up Ulster, and Ulster may tolerate it because it makes Sinn Fein ridiculous. And therein lies the hope of the Convention; for, as the Ulster talk and the Sinn Fein talk are both mostly baby talk, any sane solution must have this double effect. It only remains to find such a solution, and to make a propaganda of it sufficient to convince the parliamentary Opportun-

ists that it has acquired enough backing from public opinion to make it possible for a candidate to advocate it without losing votes.

I shall therefore begin by demonstrating to the entire satisfaction of Ulster that the Sinn Feiners are idiots. I shall then demonstrate to the satisfaction of Sinn Fein that the Ulster Impossibilists are idiots. Having thus ingratiated myself with both parties, I shall venture upon a few incidental references to the interests of England and of the rest of the Empire in the question. Finally, I shall propound the solution.

WE OURSELVES

Sinn Fein means We Ourselves: a disgraceful and obsolete sentiment, horribly anti-Catholic, and acutely ridiculous in the presence of a crisis which has shown that even the richest and most powerful countries, twenty times as populous as Ireland and more than a hundred times as spacious, have been unable to stand by themselves, and have been glad to accept the support of their bitterest traditional enemies.

Sinn Fein has an extremely high opinion of the Irish people: that is, of itself. It has an inborn sense of superiority to all who have had the misfortune to be born in other countries, which I share, quite irrationally. It is hardly too much to say that Ireland is the Malvolio of the nations, "sick of self-love," and that Sinn Fein's delight is to propagate this morose malady. Some of the results are dangerous: others only ridiculous. The dangerous result is the arming and drilling of young countrymen so stupendously ignorant of the magnitude and resources of the Great Powers that they speak and read of "striking a decisive blow at England" without suspecting that England or any other Western European Power, except, perhaps, the principality of Monaco, could wipe them off the face of the earth from the water or the air without setting foot on Irish soil. They are quite capable of attacking

a police station with all the seriousness of the Germans attacking Verdun or Sir Douglas Haig investing the Flanders ridges. They actually put up a stunning fight in Dublin in Easter 1916, and were so clumsily and barbarously tackled that they are able to point to the walls and portico and statues of their stronghold, the General Post Office, standing unscathed in the midst of acres of devastation, as a proof that the British artillery cannot hit a haystack at point blank range.

Fed on dreams and Irish air, they are subject to an agonizing desire to die for Ireland which makes it quite impossible to keep them in order by the police methods customary in free countries. To them the war against England has the mediæval double quality of being a holy war and a chivalrous romance at the same time: they not only carry the flag of Freedom but wear the colors of the Dark Rosaleen: a Dulcinea proof against all disillusion. Baton charges and silly police court prosecutions of Boy Scouts for illegal drilling produce as much effect on them as briars and bee stings on a bear. Forbidden to wear uniform or carry arms, they formed a column three miles long, fully equipped and armed, and gave an impressive funeral to Thomas Ashe, whose body lay in state under their guard at the Dublin Guildhall, with the British Army hiding in the cellars.

Dublin Castle says: "This is intolerable. Let us provoke them to fight and then annihilate them." It provokes them accordingly, and finds that it has not the heart to finish the program. Theoretically the Castle should furnish every police station in Ireland with a couple of machine guns, and replace the batons by Mills bombs. It should exhibit these weapons in practice every week at public gardens and drills. It should shew the constabulary co-operating with aeroplanes, and the two co-operating with the local sanitary authority in demolishing a slum occasionally. But practically it does none of these things, perhaps be-

cause it dares trust nobody, not even the Royal Irish Constabulary, who are more Irish than royal, and perhaps because it is even more hopelessly out of date than the Sinn Feiners themselves, and still thinks of a revolt as an assembly of pikes at the rising of the moon, to be put down by bayonet and Brown Bess, with plenty of informing and hanging to follow. However that may be, the Sinn Feiners have not the least idea of what they are up against, and see nothing extravagant in the notion that less than a million adult males, without artillery, ships, or planes, could bring the British Empire to its knees in a conflict of blood and iron. This is the dangerous (to themselves) side of their Sinn Fein.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Now for the ridiculous side. They propose that the Irish question should be settled by "The Peace Conference." By this they mean that when the quarrel between the Central and Ottoman Empires on the one side, and the United States of America, the British Empire, the French Republic, Italy, Japan, etc., etc., etc., etc., on the other, comes to be settled, the plenipotentiaries of these Powers, at the magic words, "Gentlemen, IRELAND!" will rise reverently; sing "God Save Ireland"; and postpone all their business until they have redressed the wrongs of Rosaleen. A wise Irishman might well pray that his country may have the happiness to be forgotten when the lions divide their prey: one hardly wants the unfortunate island to be flung like a bone to a half-satisfied dog, as Cyprus was at the Berlin Conference. Sinn Fein is not troubled with any such modest misgivings. It really does think that the world consists of Ireland and a few subordinate continents.

12

CASEMENT'S PLAN

Now let us turn from the megalomaniac delusions of Sinn Fein to its practical aspirations. First, there is the Casement scheme. Casement was no ignorant countryside dreamer: he was a traveller and an official diplomatist. His plan, which has been for a long time in print in America, was that Ireland should bank on a German victory when the great war came. Germany's main object would be to break Britain's command of the sea; and he suggested that the most effective step in that direction would be to make Ireland an independent State right in the fairway of England's maritime commerce.

This was a perfectly legitimate political speculation; and it may still, in spite of the revolution made in the sea problem by the submarines, recommend itself to Germany in the event of her coming out of the war in a position to demand such a change. It rushes into the head of Sinn Fein as air rushes into a vacuum. Before the war there was something to be said for it in Ireland; for there was then some excuse for the popular belief that the treaties by which Great Powers, for their own purposes, guarantee the independence of little States as buffers and the like, are something more than scraps of paper. That is to say, the independence of Belgium and Greece seemed worth having then. Does anyone think it worth having now?

Surely, of all sorts of dependence, the most abjectly wretched is that in which a minor State is helplessly dependent on a powerful neighbor, who accepts no responsibility for her and shares nothing with her, but makes her soil the No Man's Land between two frontiers hostile when war breaks out. If the English had a pennyworth of political sagacity instead of being, as they are, incorrigible Sinn Feiners almost to the last man, they would long ago have brought the Irish Separatists to their senses by threatening them with

independence. It is as plain as the stars in heaven that if England tried to cast Ireland off, it would be necessary for Ireland, if she could, to make war on England, as Lincoln made war on Jefferson Davis, to maintain the Union. Yet here are these two sets of fools: one repudiating an invaluable alliance in the name of freedom, and the other insisting on conferring the boon by force in the guise of conquest. How Irish on the part of the English! How English on the part of the Irish!

FISCAL AUTONOMY

Sinn Fein has one other pseudo-practical cry: Fiscal Autonomy. And if Sinn Fein does not think better of it, Sinn Fein will get what it is inconsiderately demanding. For here again it is quite clear that England has everything to gain and Ireland everything to lose by separate banking accounts. It means shilling telegrams for Ireland and ninepenny ones for England, with postage rates to correspond. It means grants-in-aid to all the English counties for housing, education, public health, roads, and railways, out of the colossal fund of British rent nationalized by supertaxation, and nothing for the Irish counties. It means rent and taxes collected in Ireland and spent in munition-making in England.

When Blücher saw London he said: "What a city to loot!" That is how I, as an Irish Socialist, feel about London and her ground rents. Sinn Fein wants to protect London from me, and thinks that in doing so it will be protecting Dublin. Sancta simplicitas! The beggar refuses to pool with the millionaire; and the millionaire, terrified, calls for horse, foot, and artillery to force the beggar to rifle his pockets. When people ask me what Sinn Fein means, I reply that it is Irish for John Bull.

Well may Ulster ask, "Are these Sinn Feiners to be allowed to rule us?" Deeply may Ulster feel that

in me, the Protestant Shaw, she has found an inspired spokesman. But wait a bit. In my next article I shall put Ulster's brains on my dissecting table. And then my momentary popularity in Belfast will wane.

CHAPTER II

THE FOLLY OF ULSTER

IT is in the power of the Westminster Parliament to re-establish the Irish National Parliament in Dublin and place Ulster in the position of having either to accept the government of that Parliament or undertake a rebellion which would be a rebellion against England and the Empire no less than against Ireland. This does not trouble Ulster much: she is fully as rebellious as any other province. What is more, she could carry such a rebellion through if only her front remained united. The Speaker's writ would not run in Antrim if Antrim were solid on the point of treating it as a scrap of paper. All the rest of Ireland could not coerce a united Ulster; and to repeat the original sin that delivered Ireland into England's hand by calling in English soldiers to coerce Irishmen would be morally impossible.

There is quite as much fight in Ulster as in Sinn Fein, though Ulster repudiates the national flag, and classes the Dark Rosaleen with the Virgin Mary as an idol. It does not want to die for Ireland: on the contrary, it believes that those who die for Ireland go straight to hell; but it wants to send them there and have the island all to itself. "No surrender" is burnt so deep into its brain that it still chalks that dogged phrase up on the walls as if it were only yesterday that the bows of the Mountjoy burst the boom, and the hosts of King James scattered and left Derry starving but victorious. Ulster children

still repeat the derisive doggerel, "Sleether slaughther, holy wather"; and the adults are as determined as ever that "the Protestant boys shall carry the drum."

As a Protestant myself (and a little to spare), I am highly susceptible to the spirit these war cries express; and though I know that King William is as dead as Bloody Mary, and that if it should turn out rather unexpectedly that the old Ulster brimstone hell actually exists, all the thoroughgoing Protestants of Ulster will most assuredly spend eternity in it for usurping the divine judgment seat, yet if it comes to a fight between the north and south, I will back Ulster to at least deadlock any military force that Catholic Ireland can bring against her.

WHAT A UNITED ULSTER COULD DO

A united Ulster could hold the Protestant counties against a Dublin Parliament and form an independent State like the little republic of Andorra. It could not, of course, force Ulster members on the English Parliament. It could not do the thing by halves: it would have to cut the London painter as completely as the Dublin one. But it could absolutely ignore and boycott College Green, and beat Home Rule by Homer Rule, if I may put it in that way. And in its consciousness of this lies the strength of its "We won't have it" and the Cromwellian force of its rendering of "O God, our help in ages past."

But there is the If to be got over. *If* Ulster were united! Now, Sir John Lonsdale has no misgivings on that score: he has told us that on this question he and his poorest laborer will stand shoulder to shoulder to the death. He has no prevision of what very cold shoulders they would be when the situation began to develop.

THE ULSTER DELUSION

For Sir John Lonsdale, speaking authentically with the voice of Protestant Ulster, never was more mistaken in his life than he is about that solidarity of his with his poorest laborer. He is obsessed with an illusion as gross as the megalomaniac illusions of Sinn Fein; and so is his poorest laborer: hence their present agreement. They have a penny-dreadful vision of an Irish parliament establishing the Inquisition; massacring the Protestant infants; condemning all the maids of Ulster to the doom of Maria Monk; inviting the Pope to transfer the Vatican to Maynooth: exempting the priests from the jurisdiction of the civil courts; making mixed marriages illegal; reviving the penal laws with the boot on the other leg; and crushing the shipyards of Belfast by huge import duties on steel, raw materials, and everything English, whilst dispensing unheard-of bounties to farmers, graziers, dairymen, and convent workshops.

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION

Now, no doubt, if an Irish Parliament behaved in this insane manner, Ulster would be solid against it. So would the rest of Ireland. That is why no Irish Parliament would behave so even if it wanted to. For a long time it would be mortally afraid to touch the religious question at all; and when at last it was driven to do so by the abuses which the irresponsible power and wealth of the Roman Catholic Church have produced (it is really far more tyrannical than the Established Church of England, just because it is not State established and State regulated, as every national Church ought to be, and is indeed not even national),

its operations would be exactly like those of all the other jealous secular Governments in Europe: that is, they would consist of curtailments of the power of the clergy, reduction of fees for masses and for birth, death, and marriage services, inspection and regulation of schools and convent workshops, State selection of bishops, and an interference with the multiplication of religious houses which might go the length even of suppression.

The notion that a democratically constituted modern secular authority ever has used or will use its power to increase the power of its rival, the Church, or even refrain for long from disabling, if not actually plundering the Church, is, to say the least, extremely unhistorical. As to the shipbuilding industry, if Belfast ever loses it, it will be because the great gantries will have flown to the Atlantic coast, which, when St. George's Channel and the Straits of Dover are tunnelled and bridged by aeroplanes, will be the extreme west coast of the Eurasian continent. Its magnificent natural harbourages will tempt shipbuilding capital from all over the world, beginning, let us hope for the honor of Protestant enterprise, with Belfast. Harland and Wolff, if they are not hopelessly extinct volcanoes, must have already surveyed all the great Irish Atlantic bays, from Blacksod and Killary to Kenmare and Bantry, with a view to these imminent possibilities.

FISCAL UNITY AND THE TARIFF REFORM LEAGUE

In opposition to the Sinn Fein cry of Fiscal Autonomy, Ulster raises the cry of Fiscal Unity. It is just as inconsiderate a folly as the other: there can be neither fiscal unity nor fiscal autonomy between Ireland and Britain. What both parties are thinking about is the old tariff war between England and Ireland, put a stop to by Adam Smith and William

Pitt. Ireland's imagination is still in the eighteenth century when it is not in the seventeenth. The danger now is not that this war will be revived by Home Rule, but that, Home Rule or no Home Rule, Irish industries may be involved in tariff wars between England and the Great Powers, in which the interests of Ireland will be as little considered as those of the Blasket Islands.

Ireland needs fiscal autonomy enough to keep herself out of these wars, and fiscal unity enough to prevent Birmingham and Lancashire from trying to capture the industries of Belfast. What the Cork Chamber of Commerce calls Fiscal Autonomy is quite compatible with all the Fiscal Unity Belfast need demand. Ulster should study the Tariff Reform movement in England before shouting any rash ultimatum. That movement was a very simple one. The manufacturing midlands in England wanted to manufacture everything that was used in England, and demanded a tariff to keep foreign goods out. The coast towns of England, being maritime carriers, wanted everything used in England manufactured abroad, and everything made in England sent abroad to pay for it. That, and not the principles of Free Trade, which nobody in the country understood or cared about (except Mr. Balfour, who was forced by his party to go back on them), was what defeated the Tariff Reform League.

BELFAST AND FREE TRADE

Now, Belfast is a coast town and dockyard, as overwhelmingly interested in Free Trade as Portsmouth or Southampton. Its demand for fiscal unity with the English midlands, now biding their time for another and possibly successful attempt, is suicidal imbecility. What it needs is free trade with the other island, and a free hand to maintain free trade with the rest of the world whether the other island discards it or not.

One would think that so obvious a point could not have escaped a moderately intelligent hen, much less a community that prides itself on its hardheadedness as Ulster does. That is what comes of thinking about King William and his ally the Pope when you should be thinking about Mr. Hewins and Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

THE LITTLE RIFT IN SIR JOHN LONSDALE'S LUTE

But when Ulster comes to her senses on the tariff question, her solidarity will still be unimpaired; for here Sir John Lonsdale's interest is also that of his poorest laborer. All Ulster's power of ignoring the Irish and defying the English Parliament rests, as we have seen, on this solidarity; and it is clearly not the fiscal question that will break the united front. What will break it with ridiculous ease and suddenness is something that neither Ulster nor Sinn Fein foresees, because it is something that is hardly half a century old: to wit, Socialism in Parliament.

When Parnell began his agitation, the notion that men working for weekly wages could become Cabinet Ministers; that Labor parties should not only exist in British Parliaments, but hold office there; that Socialist leaders in office, even at the head of Governments, should become too common throughout Europe to be worth mentioning: all this would then have seemed the maddest moonshine. It is now commonplace contemporary fact. Yet it seems still as incredible and unnatural to the Ulster Protestant as the story of Noah's Ark and the adventure of Jonah seem plausible and natural enough to be of the essence of religious truth.

LABOR AND SOCIALISM

But Ulster's incredulity, which it usually calls its faith, cannot keep Labor and Socialism out of an

Irish Parliament. And at the first breath of Socialism the solidarity of Ulster will vanish like the mirage it is. The Ulster employers could say, no doubt, "We shall not put up an Ulster Protestant to contest a seat in this Parliament of rebels; and our workmen will see that no Catholic does it; so there will be no election." But what about a Labor candidate, with his Fabian pamphlets and his Labour manifestoes, and his Whitley Report, and his eight-hours day, and his minimum wage, and his denunciation of profiteering, and his skilful irritant touch on all the open sores: the continual nibbling at the piece-work rate, the sweating, the victimization, the unemployment, the slum death rates and so forth, culminating in the glad news that the Ulster seats can be won for Labor without a blow, as the employers are sulking against Home Rule and allowing their "hands" a walk-over at the polls?

Is it not clear that the Ulster boycott of the Irish Parliament would break down at the very first glimpse of the possibility of this, and that the employers would rush to contest all the seats, and, if they won them, would be only too glad to combine in the Irish Parliament with the Catholic farmers of the south to curb the pretensions of the industrial proletariat?

Thus Ulster's "We won't have it" turns out, the moment it is confronted with the realities of modern life instead of the grudges and bigotries of 1689, to be the idlest of petulances. Without violating a single letter of Mr. Lloyd George's pledge that Ulster shall never be coerced, the Irish Parliament will assimilate Belfast as easily as a whale assimilates a pteropod. The dream of passive resistance is as impracticable as that irresistible blow which the Sinn Fein Volunteers think they can strike at the British Empire. Ulster cannot prevent the Westminster Parliament setting up an Irish Parliament; and the moment an Irish Parliament comes into existence the Irish Protestants cannot allow the Irish Catholics to get five minutes start of them in it. So much for the Lonsdale boycott!

THE ZANZIBARI INVINCIBLES

Some Ulster diehards will not flinch from this demonstration. They will say: "What you have convinced us of is that we must not be content with passive resistance: we must make war on the south; and we will." To which I reply, simply, "You won't. You can't afford to. Look at your figures. There is more money in Irish butter and cattle than in Irish ships and textiles. And if you did, all you could achieve would be Protestant Home Rule, with all the rest of Ireland to hold down, and all the rest of the Empire against you. No doubt you are as ready to take on that job as Sinn Fein is to conquer England. But how many sane Ulster men will you carry with you in that crackbrained enterprise?"

When the Sultan of Zanzibar ordered the admiral of his second-hand penny steamboat to go out and sink the British Fleet, and the poor devil actually went, the British sailors cheered him. There is always something exhilarating in the infatuation of a heroic ignoramus. No doubt Ireland, north and south, teems with Zanzibari courage. Sir Edward Carson had not a jot more sense than Connolly and President Pearse. Before the war he had the consolation of believing that the little handful of officers who then commanded the British Army would refuse to fight against Ulster. They are a pretty big handful now. Both north and south, by lifting up a finger, could find experienced officers enough to lead all the volunteers that Ireland could produce, if they were fools enough to think that the Irish question can be settled to-day as it was when the English King was beaten at the Boyne by the Dutch king and the Pope.

ULSTER IN THE TOILS

Thus we see that the Ulster variety of Sinn Fein, like the southern one, has not a leg to stand on. But of the two, Ulster is far more in the grip of modern

industrial civilization than the other provinces. Agricultural Ireland, with Sir Horace Plunkett and the Irish Agricultural Organization Society to teach it, is actually building a new co-operative civilization for itself out of the resources of the Irish soil and climate, whilst Belfast remains up to its neck in the old nineteenth century form of industry that is dependent for its materials, as for its credit and cash nexus, on the international capitalist civilization of which it is a part.

Mr. George Russell could make out a serious case for a self-sufficient south with his Irish Homestead as its trade paper. Sir John Lonsdale could not make out the shadow of a case for the power of Ulster to say "We won't have it" to any industrial group on earth, in England or out of it, unless the "we" means "you and I." It is this very dependence that makes Ulster cling to the Union and dread separation.

Well, there is not going to be any separation. On the contrary, there is going to be much more union than ever there was before. That will become apparent in the next chapter, when I will give the obvious solution of the problem. Being obvious, it will not be new. It will indeed be older than Parnellism. But when it was new, it was too good to be true. And bigger places than Ireland had to come first. It will be none the worse for us now that it has been tried on the kangaroo.

CHAPTER III

THE SOLUTION

HOME RULE FOR ENGLAND

EVEN more important than the setting up of an Irish Parliament is the abolition of the now hopelessly obsolete institution at Westminster that calls itself an

Imperial Parliament, and is neither imperial nor national nor English nor Scottish nor Irish, neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring. It was hopelessly beaten by its work in the old days of *laisser-faire*, when it was believed that the secret of government is not to govern. To-day, when it has been discovered that the secret of government is to let nothing alone, it has been reduced to absurdity; and the country is being governed partly by the major-generals, and partly by bodies unknown to the Constitution.

There is only one Dublin Castle in Ireland: there are a dozen in England. When is that wretched country going to insist on enjoying Irish liberty? Sir Horace Plunkett has not to demand Home Rule for Ireland: he has to offer it to England, to Scotland, and even to Wales, if Wales cares for it. At present the four nations are supposed to be governed by an Anglo-Scottish-Irish-Welsh Parliament, in which the Irish, though representing only one-tenth of the population of the whole and less than a third of the area, has more than a sixth of the membership; holds the balance of power; and occupies so much of the time of the House that its business seems to consist mainly of Irish legislation and the discussion of Irish grievances, though Ireland is in every way a happier and freer country to live in than England.

The Irish members also interfere extensively in English and Scottish business, but are so successful in keeping Ireland out of British arrangements that until very lately Irish clocks did not keep the same time as English ones. Irish laborers and small cultivators live in cottages built for them out of public funds, whilst English navvies and skilled workers in the building trade pay half-a-crown a week for half a bed in a room containing six or eight inmates, and are fortunate if they can find even this accommodation within two miles of their job. Irish farmers buy their land cheaply on English security, whilst Englishmen can hardly obtain even allotments at exorbitant prices.

The English laborer is forced into the trenches to fight for Ireland: the Irish laborer pleases himself as to whether he joins the army or not. Any nation less sheepish than the English would have cut the cable long ago and insisted on having a Parliament of its own for its own affairs.

Therefore Ireland must force English Home Rule on England as a measure of common humanity and good political sense. Scotland will not refuse a Scottish Parliament; and Wales can have a Welsh one if she likes. But Ireland will not let England go quite free: the British military forces are too valuable an asset; and Ireland has too much to gain, as we have seen, by pooling services and pooling rent with the other island. Besides, England, left to herself, would go to the devil politically; and her fate would involve the others. There must, therefore, be a Federal Parliament in addition to the national Parliament; and in this Federal Parliament of the British Isles Ireland will retain her representation, and probably continue to occupy more than her share of attention.

IMPERIAL REPRESENTATION FOR IRELAND

But she will have a further representation. The Empire (for convenience sake I use that offensive and inaccurate term) will be held together by a Conference, which will be a new experiment in democracy, forced on us by the fact that the Dominions will not stand the imposition on them of a central body with legislative or coercive powers of any sort. This Conference will be a representative body; and its business will be to consider the affairs of the Empire as a whole, and to recommend necessary simultaneous measures to the Federal Parliaments. It must consist of representative statesmen from all the federations concerned. Some of the British federation's representatives will be Irish statesmen. Ireland will thus

have her national Parliament, her representation in the Federal Parliament, and her voices in the Imperial Conference.

The Irishmen who want anything less than this are clearly Separatist; and, I repeat, separation is out of the question, as it would leave England with as strong a hold over Ireland as over Belgium, whilst Ireland would have no hold over England at all.

"DOMINION HOME RULE"

From the moment the word "Convention" was mentioned, it was clear to those who knew the history of such conventions that the federal solution was inevitable. The British North America Act was the outcome of the Quebec Convention. The Australian Commonwealth was the outcome of the Sydney Convention. When the Irish talk of "Dominion Home Rule" they seldom know very accurately what Dominion Home Rule is, because neither in the Canadian, Australian, nor New Zealand federations, nor in the Union of South Africa, is there anything like the ridiculous Home Rule Bill on which Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary party wasted thirty years ignoble squabbling, only to find, when it came to the point, that Ireland wants national self-government and not a grudged latchkey given with an intimation that the door will be bolted at half-past ten every night. What is meant by "Dominion Home Rule" is, roughly, that Ireland is to be like Canada and Australia and South Africa, and not like Egypt and India. And this means a federation of the British Islands.

Later on, the Eastern Empire will have to be dealt with; and whoever cannot see the importance of having the Irish question settled on lines which will make the Western Empire as homogeneous as possible politically is not much of a statesman.

This solution sweeps Catholic Sinn Fein and Ulster Sinn Fein into the same dustbin. The childish paro-

chialism of "We Ourselves" and "We won't have it" becomes ridiculous when Ireland is seen in its relation to the political system of which it forms a part. It is no use pretending that what is good enough for England, for Scotland, for Quebec, for Ontario, for New South Wales, is not good enough for Ireland. Ireland sulking in a corner by herself is nothing: Ireland with her finger in every pie will gather more than her share of plums.

REPUBLICANISM

One result will be that Ireland will cease to be Republican. Being a Republican myself, I think this a pity; but it is impossible to ignore the steady resistance of the Dominions to the substitution of any stronger link than the Crown for the Britannic Alliance (as the Fabian Society calls the Empire). The explanation is plain enough. The "Crowned Republic," which is the hollowest of journalistic phrases in England, is a reality in Australia, in South Africa, and in Canada. There the career is open to male political ambition and female social ambition as completely as in any republic, which is very far from being the case in London. And the control of the King is negligible, whereas that of a President might be formidable. Now this is precisely the state of things that will be produced in Ireland by Federal Home Rule. We are thus within easy distance of the time when England, seething with Republicanism, will have the Crown firmly held down on her writhing brows by all the other members of the Britannic Alliance, headed vociferously by Ireland.

General Smuts has voiced for us the cry of the Empire overseas: No Imperial Federation, and no Republicanism. Let Mr. de Valera take counsel accordingly. It may be the fate of America, with France and Russia, to impose the discrowned republic on Ireland and the other crowned republics as Mr.

Wilson has so bluntly threatened to impose it on Germany; but Ireland will certainly not impose it on England, nor even want to when she is restored to normal political health by Federal Home Rule.

Sir Horace Plunkett, then, must draft his Bill to establish Federal Home Rule not only in Ireland, but in England and Scotland as well. It will not be necessary to consult England: nobody ever does consult her about her own business: she will swallow it as she has swallowed Dora and the bureaucratic autocracy of the new departments. Scotland will not object: the days when no Scot leaving his country to make his career ever took a return ticket are passing: Scotland will acquiesce. The danger is not that the scheme will be rejected, but that the new national Parliaments may be weakened, and the Federal Parliament, the London Parliament, unduly exalted by an excessive provincialism.

MODERN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dreamy Ulster, steeped in its glorious, pious, and immortal memories, has not noticed that there is a far stronger case for giving separate provincial legislatures to the industrial north and the residential south of England than for doing as much for the north and south of Ireland. It is now many years since Mr. H. G. Wells woke up the Fabian Society to the fact that the units of local government in England are too small, and their boundaries (often passing down the middle of a main city thoroughfare) absurdly obsolete. If the Fabians found it necessary to propose a heptarchy for public local industrial organization, it will be easy to trump up a case for two English Parliaments. But if statesmen who would magnify the central power are allowed to confuse national with local government, and by a multiplication of provincial Parliaments reduce these Parliaments to the level of

county councils, the Bill will be wasted as far as the satisfaction of national sentiment is concerned.

Both in England and Ireland the present system of local government by counties will have to develop into local government by industrial watersheds, so to speak; but as the divisions of these will certainly not follow the divisions of the existing provinces, provincial parliaments, or even provincial councils, would become a serious obstacle to the scientific reorganization of local government which will soon become inevitable. There would be ten times more sense in making two separate Irish Parliaments for agricultural Ireland and city Ireland (say Belfast, Cork, and Dublin) than for making one Parliament for Antrim and another for Donegal.

If England were to split herself into north and south, the harm would not be very great, as there is no national question involved, and the division would be in no sense a secession; besides, either half would still contain about five times as many people as the whole of Ireland. But in Ireland no national division is possible. The internal model there must be the Union of South Africa, not the federations of Australia and British North America. Even the South African provincial councils would have to be very cautiously adopted in Ireland, where national homogeneity must be absolutely unbroken unless the old troubles are to begin all over again.

"LIVE DANGEROUSLY"

Neither this nor any other scheme is compatible with that Intransigence which is only a cloak for the Anarchism which makes crude peoples afraid to be governed at all, and which is responsible for most of the miseries of England. Parliamentary self-government is not liberty, but a means by which capable men with character enough to use it, courage enough to face the

inevitable risks of majority rule, and sense enough to see that the alternative of minority or foreign rule is still more risky, can secure what liberty is possible to individuals in civilized society under that tyranny of nature and daily need against which no political constitutions can avail.

Whether the Irish have that capacity, that character, that courage, that common sense, will be tested at the Convention. In all communities the lack of it is betrayed by one infallible sign, and that is the demand for security. Let the Irish factions remember that they cannot have liberty and security together any more than the English ones. The men of Devonshire, being in a minority in England, must take their chance of the English Parliament passing a law that all persons speaking with the Devonshire accent instead of the Oxford affectation shall have their noses cut off. The members of the Countess of Huntingdon's persuasion must risk the establishment of the Mahometan faith; and the Roman Catholics must risk the revival of the Elizabethan persecutions.

If they were not willing to face these risks they would simply be unfit for free institutions, and have to be placed under tutelage as "non-adult." And if Ulster Protestants are not prepared to take the risks of parliamentary government, then what they need politically is neither Home Rule nor Union, but a sufficiency of paternally managed orphan asylums. For the Union offers them far less security than Home Rule. The Catholics have been able to force the Westminster Parliament to desert them. They are in an insignificant minority there in members; and as to their wealth and commercial enterprise, do they really believe that the monstrous cities in which Birmingham and Wolverhampton—nay, Lancashire and Cheshire—are swallowed together as mere parishes can see Belfast without the aid of a magnifying glass?

RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY

In Ireland Belfast is formidable: in England Belfasts are six a penny, though the doughty Scot (probably of Ulster parentage) whose comment on London was, "Peebles for me!" is cherished in England as a legendary figure with affectionate admiration, which, however, butters no parsnips. If Ulster is not fit for self-government, it may as well be tyrannized over by the Pope as by Dublin Castle. In fact, the hand of the Pope is heavier on it at this moment than the hand of the Castle. It will never beat the Pope except by means of an Irish Parliament; and it will not beat him that way if it is cowardly enough to tie the hands of the Irish Parliament in respect of religion. Nothing in the Home Rule Bill condemns it more conclusively than the faithless and insulting clause that attempts to shut out religious organization from the competence of the miserable Committee-with-a-Reference which it offers as an organ of national government. By all means let us have that part of the Australian Clause 116 which forbids the setting up of religious tests, the imposing of religious observances, or the prohibition of the free exercise of any religion, but not that part of it which condemned Australia to teach her children nothing but the materialistic doctrine of the Secularist sect, and forbade her to establish her religions.

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

Sinn Fein must also face the risks of the glorious enterprise of political liberty. If it makes conditions with liberty by refusing it except on condition of fiscal autonomy and the like, it will get government without liberty, and serve it right! In federating with the Britannic Alliance it will have to give the Alliance certain guarantees in return for the power

and consequence it will have as a member. But if it begins asking for guarantees from the Alliance that national self-government will not hurt it, it will justify the Scottish officer who said to me impatiently the other day, "Oh, let us give the wretched place [Ireland] its independence, and make it a foreign Power. Then we can conquer it and treat it as a conquered country, and have no more nonsense about it." That Scot was a man after my own heart; and I hope Sinn Fein will have the gumption to applaud him.

When France faced England and all Europe with the flag of liberty, and beat them, it was not with the cry of "Security, security, and still more security," but "Audacity, audacity, and still more audacity." When Germany lost her nerve, and, instead of taking her chance with western democracy, wanted security, she plunged herself and dragged the rest of Europe into the black slavery of war, and destroyed even the common securities of life and property which are practicable for all civilized nations. And if we lose the war it will be through the terrors of those who would lose the substance of victory in a feeble snatch at the shadow of security.

Liberty is not a shelter for weaklings and children: it is an adventure for the brave and strong; and if any Irishmen can be found to disgrace their country by clamoring for security, I exhort the Convention not to coddle them with conciliation, but to brace them with wholesome contempt.

It remains only for the Convention secretariat to draft the Bill. All they need is a pair of scissors, a pot of paste, a set of copies of the British North America Act, 1867, the Commonwealth Constitution Act, 1900, and the South Africa Act, 1909, with a few special clauses which the Convention must by this time be able to draft with full knowledge of the political, fiscal, and industrial considerations which demand specifically Irish handling and conciliation.

Then strike out the colonial names and figures and replace them with Irish ones, and the thing is done. The expenses can be covered by selling the existing copies of the Home Rule Bill as waste paper.

Cahill & Co., Ltd., Printers, London and Dublin.

#653506